



## Pick Your Path to Health

### Are You Getting Immunized?

Think vaccine shots are only for your kids?

With the beginning of a new school year, parents are once again busy preparing their children for school. Besides the regular shopping trips for school supplies, visits to a health provider for vaccinations are common.

But kids are not the only ones who need vaccines. Statistics show that adults are 100 times more likely than children to die from diseases that could have been prevented if vaccines had been used. Roughly 70,000 adults die each year from these diseases or complications from these diseases.

Getting immunized is not an *option* if you want to stay healthy. It is a *necessity* for all Americans, including Asian Americans.

Asian American women are the least likely of all women to obtain preventive clinical services, according to the National Asian Women's Health Organization (NAWHO). Yet influenza is one of the leading causes of death among Asian Americans, deaths that could have been prevented by using vaccines. Influenza kills more than 1,000 Asian Americans each year.

In addition, Asian Americans have a high risk of contracting hepatitis, which is a major cause of liver disease and death. The Office on Minority Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) indicates that Asian Americans are at 300 times greater risk of contracting hepatitis B than other Americans. This risk is especially high among first- and second-generation Asian Americans.

"For Asian Americans, taking care of their children and family are their first priorities. We are promoting the importance of individual health and encouraging the idea of preventive health," says Afton Hirohama of NAWHO. NAWHO funds the National Asian American Immunization Project with support from DHHS' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This five-year national program seeks to increase the immunization rates of all Asian Americans, from babies to senior citizens.

### Vaccinations for adults

Make sure to ask your health care provider about the vaccinations you should get. According to DHHS' Office on Women's Health, here are six common vaccinations for adults: hepatitis B, influenza, measles/mumps/rubella, tetanus/diphtheria, pneumococcal, and varicella.

- Hepatitis B shot—An estimated 90 percent of the Asian population living in America have chronic hepatitis B.
- Influenza (flu) shot—The flu shot is recommended for all adults, but adults aged 65 and over, individuals with compromised or weakened immune systems, and women in their second and third trimesters of pregnancy have an increased risk of developing complications from influenza. Call your health care provider early this fall to get your flu shot.
- Measles, mumps, and rubella (German measles) shot—As many as 8 million women of childbearing age are susceptible to rubella, according to the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases. If a woman contracts rubella during pregnancy, it can result in severe birth defects, miscarriages, and stillbirths. Adults born after 1956 need to be immunized against measles, mumps, and rubella.
- Tetanus-diphtheria shot—All adults require tetanus and diphtheria immunizations once every 10 years.
- Pneumococcal (pneumonia) shot—This vaccination is necessary for everyone ages 65 and older.
- Varicella shot—If you haven't had chickenpox, you need to get this vaccination.

### **Get immunized now!**

There are many reasons to get immunized today. Begin by calling your health provider or local clinics. Don't let language and financial barriers keep you from getting immunized.

- Getting *your* vaccinations is very important to your own health.
- Make sure to talk to your health care provider about getting immunizations even if he or she doesn't bring up the subject, if you suffer from a chronic illness, and if you were born outside of the United States.
- Keep a personal immunization record. It helps you and your health provider ensure that you are fully protected against diseases that could be prevented by vaccines. Make sure you update your personal record every time you are immunized.
- Invite local clinics to come to your neighborhood and immunize residents during a "vaccination day."

- Find a clinic in your neighborhood or a local health department by calling CDC's National Immunization Information Hotline at (800) 232-2522. (Information is provided in English only.)
- To read more about immunization in your language, visit the Immunization Action Coalition's web site at <http://www.immunize.org/nsit.d/n17/catalog1.htm>. Online, you will find free publications about immunizations available in several languages. You may also request a catalog by calling 1-651-647-9009.

Getting your vaccinations up-to-date will be one of the best things you can do for yourself. It will help lead you down a path to better health.

*Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health education campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For more information about the campaign, please call 1-800-994-WOMAN or 1-888-220-5446 (TDD), or visit the National Women's Health Information Center at <http://www.4woman.gov/> To request weekly health tips by e-mail, click on the box that says, "Click Here for weekly health tips by e-mail."*